

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

MAPPING THE ETHIOPIAN TELEVISION LANDSCAPE: LEGAL AND  
AUDIENCE PERSPECTIVES

BY  
ZEWGE ABATE

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AUDIENCE PERSPECTIVES

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## Abstract

The television landscape in Ethiopia is getting more diversified in terms of global media reception whereas its local dimension is not developing so much as the country has only one state-owned television with scant component of entertainment. The sole prevalence of state television stands against legal provisions which allow other forms of ownership for commercial, public and community broadcasting services. *Mapping the Ethiopian Television Landscape: Legal and Audience Perspectives* attempts to describe the television landscape in Ethiopia focusing more on the legal provisions pertinent to television ownership and programming and the reception of global and local television programmes. The research analysed relevant legal documents to show the potentials and limitations of provisions for television broadcasting, thereby exploring the extent to which the legal framework is enabling. Moreover, the interplay between the reception of global and local television programming was examined through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews facilitated for college/university students so as to explore how audiences make meaning out of particularly Western cultural products.

The findings of the study show that young audiences have significantly sidelined local television and developed an increasing interest towards global television products. Given the perceived irrelevance of local television to their needs, the appreciation of Western cultural values by young audiences who have accesses to transnational television outlets is evident. Under the circumstances, young audiences' appreciation of their own values may come from the social environment they live in but not that much from the local television they rarely watch. The legal provisions allow the issuance of license to commercial, public and community broadcasting services. However, these provisions also somehow determine what programmes broadcasters should design. Since the regulator is highly government-affiliated, some of the restrictions and obligations for the regulator's inspection can create inconvenience for broadcasters to get in to the business.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

Ethiopia is a country having only one state controlled television station (Ethiopian Television) accountable to the House of People's Representatives. The country's media scene has significantly developed following the downfall of the Derg regime in 1991 which gave way for the emergence of the private press. Ratifying a Constitution in 1995 which made vital provisions for freedom of speech, among many other tenets of democracy, the country has seen the flourishing of private print media which offered "quite different reporting to the state-owned newspapers and is often critical of the government" ([www.bbcnews.com](http://www.bbcnews.com), accessed October 6,2007). Much to the disappointment of the Ethiopian people, what were hoped to be the most democratic elections in May, 2005, rather ended up being highly controversial. Following that, dozens of private press journalists got prosecuted, an event which, according to World Press Freedom Review of the International Press Institute (IPI) in 2006 had "almost silenced independent journalism" (ibid).

On the other hand, the television landscape in Ethiopia has not seen much change in terms of the diversification of ownership and programming. While the regulator, the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA), initially an Agency, issued licenses to two private radio

stations in 2006 and to another FM radio transmission in 2007, no private ownership of television has been allowed as yet. Comparing Ethiopia with neighbouring Kenya, we find that the latter has “at least four privately owned television broadcasters and more than nine privately owned radio stations” (Kariithi, 2002) cited in De Beer and Merrill (2004: 325). EBA was established by in June, 1999 under Proclamation No. 178/1999. It has until recently been accountable to the Prime Minister. The Authority has aimed “to ensure the expansion of a high standard, prompt and reliable broadcasting service which can contribute to the political, social and economic development and to control it thereof” (Article 4/6 of Proc. No. 178/99).

Practically, television is accessible only to 47% of the country’s geography. Although the right number of television sets all over the country is not exactly known, over one million sets have been legally registered (Strategic Plan of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority, 2006-2007/8). Given the total population of more than 77 million, according to UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, a huge section of the Ethiopian society is far from home-accessing television as a medium. In fact, well over 75% of the society living in rural Ethiopia, television remains largely a medium for urban dwellers that constitute some 14.2% of the total population (CSO, 2006:14). The local television scene can be regarded as one that severely lacks options with the state-owned television monopolizing it despite legal provisions for other types of media ownership.

As options for local television channels are very limited, transnational digital satellite television like Multichoice's DStv and free-to-air satellite television, such as ArabSat, are considered as alternative entertainment outlets particularly in Addis Ababa and other big towns in the country. Information obtained from Multichoice Ethiopia, the official agent of Multichoice Africa, indicates that there are now over 6000 DStv subscribers in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa being the location of larger number of subscriptions. Full bouquet subscription costs US\$864.00 per year to view over forty television channels categorized under nine genres, namely movies, general entertainment, life style, specialist, news and commerce, children and teens, sport, documentaries and music. There is also a range of options of subscription with relatively less fees.

ArabSat is a free-to-air television system, thus it is not possible to know exactly how many viewers it attracts. However, one can easily see that ArabSat subscribers outnumber their DStv counterparts mainly because ArabSat provides almost as many options for sources of news and entertainment with far cheaper and one time payment subscription. Marsden and Verhulst (1999:37) write that “[d]igitalization, and the compression of technologies upon which it relies, promise of an entirely new look and feel to traditional television, increasing channel quantity and picture quality.” ArabSat and DStv seem to have taken advantage of the potentials offered by digital satellite in the Ethiopian broadcasting environment where options for programme types are limited.

Any mapping exercise on the television landscape of Ethiopia, therefore, needs to consider both the local and transnational television broadcasters. As a result, the research project mainly attempts to deal with the situations of local television programming, issues of ownership, global media viewership in the country, etc. to eventually picture what the overall television environment looks like.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Local television programming in Ethiopia has been very narrow in the sense that it lacks the commercial and public service wings of the broadcasting industry. In fact, Ethiopian viewers, except for those few having access to transnational media, have the one-channel government television to tune into. We may add the Addis Ababa Television (ETV2) for viewers in the capital though. The limited local options prevail in a situation where global television is emerging as a significant alternative for city viewers to say the least. Thus it is interesting to examine the television landscape of Ethiopia in a situation where local commercial television is totally missing, and government television is struggling to sustain its dominance in the face of transnational television at least in cities and big towns. At this juncture, it is worth mentioning that the researcher assumes that the local media landscape has underutilized the legal and regulatory provisions set aside for its operations. This is not to underestimate, however, that the legal environment has also basic limitations relating to issues like the independence of the regulator, to mention but one. Under the circumstances,

it may also be assumed that television viewers with options of transnational media may sideline Ethiopian Television- ETV- and increasingly incline to foreign media viewership.

This research, therefore, attempts to describe the state of local and transnational television in Ethiopia in terms of audience reaction to these media and the legal provisions for their operation. It also examines the relevance of the Media Imperialism thesis, with all its claims that the one way flow of media products from the West to the rest or developing nations largely affects the local cultural dynamics of the latter, is relevant to global media viewership in Ethiopia..

### **1.3 General Objective of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to map the television landscape of Ethiopia from audience and legal perspectives.

### **1.4 Specific Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of the study include:

1. To describe the focuses of local television programming;
2. To explore audiences' reaction to local and television transnational programmes;

3. To assess the legal provisions for both local and transnational television outlets;
4. to examine the implications of ownership on television programming; and
5. To suggest better ways of vitalizing the scene of local television programming.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

In order to meet the objectives of the study, the following questions will be raised.

1. What are the ownership implications of local television?
2. How do viewers evaluate the different television programmes?
3. What regulatory issues are at play in the Ethiopian television broadcasting environment?

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study will provide an overall picture of the television landscape in Ethiopia, with particular emphasis on the provision of Transnational television in the forms of DStv and AbrabSat television. It will, therefore, be of vital resource for researchers interested to initiate further studies in the area. The findings and recommendations of the study will help broadcasters in particular to revitalize the scene of local television programming, considering the flourishing transnational television channels with diversified options of better quality.

## 1.7 Scope of the Study

While there are such illegally subscribed televisions like *Showtime* and *GTv*, the research focuses only on Digital Satellite Television (DStv), which is registered by the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority, and ArabSat, which is a free-to-air transnational television. The only local television, the Ethiopian Television (ETV) is also included in the study.

The legal documents treated in the study are only those endorsed during the period of the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which is the governing party from 1991. These are:

- Proclamation No. 34/1994, A Proclamation to Provide for the Freedom of the Press;
- Proclamation No. 178/1999, A Proclamation to Provide for the Systematic Management of Broadcasting Service; and
- Proclamation No. 1/1995, A Proclamation to Pronounce the Coming into Effect of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Relevant directives for foreign and local broadcasting are also consulted.

The television landscape in Ethiopia has also been seen from audience perspective. Accordingly, the reactions of 29 university/college students in Addis Ababa to the main television programs they watch have been analysed. It was also attempted to get the views of six broadcast students in the Mass Media Training Institute of Addis Ababa University, who were included in a heterogeneous focus group, on the television landscape in Ethiopia. Given the non-representative sampling, the results of the study are not generalizable.

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

The research has indeed been highly constrained by shortage of time. The approval of the proposal by the Academic Commission alone has taken quite long. Needless to say that the release of research funds came later than it should have been.

Organizing groups of respondents was also a tiring exercise. While it was planned to organize six participants in each group, only four were possible to organize in some of the groups because of failure of some members to join the groups.

## 1.9 Thesis Organization

The study is constituted of five chapters. The first chapter presents an overall introduction for the study together with statement of the problem, general and specific objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and limitations of the study.

Chapter two, Review of Related Literature, provides the basic literature on media history in Ethiopia, transnational television, the media imperialism thesis and antithesis, and it also briefly discusses proclamations relevant to television broadcasting. Also briefly, it introduces readers to the list of programmes run on local television and describes how transnational television providers operate in the country.

Chapter three discusses and justifies the methodology used for the study. Then, chapter four presents and analyses the findings obtained from focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and individual interviews, and of course from the examination of relevant legal documents.

Finally, the salient elements of the study will be briefly summarized and recommendations will be forwarded in chapter five.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Introduction

Ethiopia is a country with a long tradition of oral communications. The first medium of mass communications is considered to be the ‘negarit’ (drum) drawing the public’s attention towards what the ‘awaj negari’ (herald) had to say shouting on the tower to tell the latest news, decrees and proclamations (Ministry of Information (MoI) 1966:3). In the early 20th century, the first handwritten newspaper, *Aemero*, began to circulate in as few as 24 copies. This was followed by the establishment of Birhanena Selam Printing Press in 1921 where the Amharic newspapers, Birhanena Selam (a new one), and *Aemero* (formerly handwritten) began to be published (Amsalu Aklilu (unpublished), MoI, 1966:3).

Radio came onto the Ethiopian media scene in 1935 with the installation of equipment of very limited transmission capacity. Acquiring a new structure under Ministry of Information and a transmitter of 100kw capacity, the Ethiopian Radio resumed transmission in the era of post-Italian aggression (Strategic Plan for Government Mass Media, 2003-2005:11). Television broadcasting was inaugurated in Ethiopia on November 2, 1964, when Emperor HaileSELLASIE II appeared on the nation’s first television broadcast on the 33rd anniversary of his coronation (MoI 1966:25).

Initially the Ethiopian Television Service “was burdened with a preponderance of foreign filmed material”, but gradually began to increase its proportion of local production, the most significant programming in this regard being the introduction of Educational Television in October, 1965 (MoI, 1966). In 1966, the number of television sets in homes and public places receiving the television programmes running for two hours and forty minutes every night, apart from the regular day time programmes for schools, was estimated at 5000 (MoI, 1966). These were or black and white transmissions. Colour television transmission began late in 1984 when the Derg regime marked the celebration of its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary (Strategic Plan for Government Mass Media, 2003-2005:16).

The Ministry of Information (1966:3) also stated that “the mass media in Ethiopia have functions and responsibilities” that set them apart from those in developed nations. Accordingly, mass communications in Ethiopia prioritized “such areas as education, literacy, telecommunications, industrial development, agricultural reform, the development of democratic institutions and of local self government [...] and many others.”

Ethiopia has significantly abandoned after 1991 its political traverse into communism. As Andargachew (2006:12) establishes, “The political programme of Ethiopia for the post-Haileselassie period was articulated by the Ethiopian Students’ Movement, composed of university and school students at home and abroad.” The Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), which is the founding Party of the incumbent Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary

Democratic Front (EPRDF), was itself initially a Marxist-Leninist movement (Siegfried Pausewen et al., 2002). As Andargachew (2006:15) indicated:

Given its Marxist past, EPRDF would have been expected to implement the political project of the Ethiopian Students' Movement. However, it came to power at a time when the cold war had come to an end, with neoliberalism having emerged preponderant and communism discredited. It was a time when the leaders of the communist states the world over,[...] were either driven out of power or else forced to switch over the West by promising to embrace capitalism and a pluralist political order.

Although the fulfilment of its promises remain debatable, EPRDF has embraced the West's demands of democracy as Africa in general "so far has not developed an alternative model of democracy, either in philosophy or in political practices" (Siegfried Pauseweng et al. 2002:5).

As part of the democratization process, Ethiopia endorsed a new Constitution which has embodied provisions of comprehensive rights for citizens among which the rights to free expressions. Article 29/2 of the Constitution declares that:

[e]veryone has the right to freedom of expression without interference. The right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his choice (page 89).

This chapter attempts to explore the legal provisions that are pertinent to matters of television ownership and types of broadcasting services.. Then, it will also be attempted to present the salient literature on implications of ownership and growing exposure of viewers in developing countries to transnational television outlets. Specifically, the Media Imperialism thesis and its critiques will briefly be discussed so as to eventually see its theoretical claims against the findings of this research. Also an overall description of local television programming will be presented in this chapter.

## **2.2 Ethiopia’s Current Television Broadcasting Landscape**

### **2.2.1 Ownership**

Television has always been under state ownership in Ethiopia. Article 29/5 of the Ethiopian Constitution stipulates that “any media financed by or under the control of the state shall be operated in a manner ensuring its capacity to entertain diversity in the expression of opinions” (1995:89). Nevertheless, it seems that this stipulation has not been fully implemented, as ETV, like other government media outlets, has been involved largely in the propagation of the government’s points of view. One can fairly argue that, except that government media allowed airtime for opposition parties during elections, no treatment of “diversity in the expressions of opinions” that Article 29/5 provides for is evident yet.

There is no clear statement in the Broadcasting Proclamation No. 178/1999 as to who can own a broadcast medium. By the look of its definition of a licensee under Article 3/3 of the same proclamation as “a person licensed in accordance with Article 20 of this proclamation”, which in turn stipulates the types of radio and television licenses, there does not seem to be a restriction to private television broadcasting. Only political parties, non-Ethiopians and religious organizations are not entitled to apply for broadcast licenses as clearly stated under Article 19 of the same proclamation although in practice, stations like Radio Fana are said to be controlled by the incumbent party, the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) (Tsega Maria & Abebe, 2000). The Proclamation to Provide for the Freedom of the Press (Proclamation no. 34/1992), however, ensures under its Article 5/1 that “[a]ny person who is an Ethiopian national may singly or jointly with other persons having Ethiopian nationality, carry on any press activity.”

### **2.2.2. Ownership Implications of the Ethiopian Television Landscape**

Much of the literature commenting on the ownership of the media suggests that media owners are able to influence the content of ‘their’ media. As O’Neil (1992) cited in Campbell (2004:64) argues, “[i]n practice press freedom can in fact be seen as synonymous merely with the freedom exercised by those with ultimate editorial control over a news organization’s output”. Television in Africa is largely owned and controlled by governments. A.J. Tudesq asserts that across the African continent, “[t]he respective heads of state were able to establish a monopolistic control over the television system even more easily than

radio”. Information, he further points out, “is not seen as a presentation of novelties, a search for the sensational, but as a military act, an explanation of governmental decisions and the means of orienting opinions” (in **Bourgault**, 1995: 109-110). A report from Freedom House in 2004 on media freedom concurs: Africa is “heavily tilted toward state control or other barriers to media system” and the control over the media is a means to maintain political power by hindering the free flow of information (de Beer and Merrill 2004:58).

The issue of ownership is equally or even more relevant to the private media which, at the global level, increasingly have been characterized by concentration of ownership. What we call the global media are owned by quite a few individuals or conglomerates largely based in the United States. Herman and McChesney write the following:

The global media market is dominated by ten or so vertically integrated media conglomerates, most of which are based in the United States. Another thirty or forty significant supporting firms round out the meaningful positions in the system. These firms operate in oligopolistic markets with substantial barriers to entry. [...] Their competition is softened [...] by a vast array of joint ventures, strategic alliances, and cross ownership among the leading firms (1997:104).

These conglomerates not only determine the kind of entertainment to be provided in transnational media outlets but they also choose what should the news and what their illustrations or images are like. Paterson et al (1996:145) explains that “the few sources for those international images [...] account for why different broadcasters tend to carry the same few international stories each day”.

Transnational media like MultiChoice’s DStv are hardly different in this regard as they are predominantly an avenue for the transmission of global media products. Through the South African based transnationals, the country appears to be not only “on the receiving end of cultural products carried by globalizing media”, but it has also come out to be a regional media power through the dissemination across the African continent of both local South African and other African productions alongside the global media products (Teer-Tomaselli, et al. 2007:153-154). As a broadcast-publisher and subscription manager, DStv channels programmes imported in USA, Europe or Asia as well as others compiled from imported programming together with locally commissioned ones (ibid).

Although the geographical coverage of and people’s economic capabilities to subscribe to such media systems are not that huge yet, Ethiopia’s reception of DStv services and free-to-air television like ArabSat can in effect add to the one way flow of global cultural products.

## **2.3 Local Television Programming**

### **2.3.1 The Ethiopian Television**

Covering more than 47% of the country's geography (Strategic Plan for State Mass Media, 2004/5-2005/6:16), the Ethiopian Television (ETV) operates solely in a non-competitive local television broadcasting environment. Notwithstanding a small element of entertainment, ETV is a socio-politico-economic medium with programmes produced in four local languages and one foreign language, namely Amharic, Oromiffa, Tigriyna, Somali and English. It covers a broadcast period of some 60 hours of weekday (sometimes longer, depending on the length of late hour foreign movies run on Mondays and Thursdays) and more than 27 hours of weekend programming.

As the official language at national level is Amharic, the Amharic service provides the longest duration of six and a half hours every weekday, more than nine hours on Saturdays and eight and a half hours on Sundays. Some two hours of this duration may be deducted from the total as they are allotted for such foreign products as African Music, Children's films (foreign cartoon films), etc.

In the Amharic service alone, serious news programmes account for nearly five hours of daytime and another four and a half hours of evening broadcasting per week. Other programmes focus on health, education, development, law and justice, politics, police and society, corruption, good governance, etc. Even talk shows and television dramas are often preoccupied with issues related to HIV/Aids, other socio-cultural concerns, corrupt practices, and so on.

Typical entertainment shows are the *Ethiopian Idol* and *Debo* that are entirely music-and-dance related productions each running for nearly an hour per week. The former involves significant commercial breaks. Sport news and talk shows cover 50 and 55 minutes respectively. In between some programmes and as a separate programming, some musical transitions including *Hibre Trit* are run. These often include local musical pieces and short comic scenes, African music, works of amateur musicians and the like.

The other three local languages, Oromiffa, Tigrinya and Somali, comprise six and a half hours for the former two, and three and half hours for the latter of weekly national programming with more or less similar areas of focus to the Amharic service. The English service covers seven hours a week.

ETV has also set aside time for programmes at regional level. Accordingly, Oromia Television (STVO) has recently realized the transmission of the region's (Oromia's) seven-hour programming a week. The Amhara Mass Media Agency sandwiches a total of one-hour weekly broadcasting in between the Tuesday and Thursday nights' Amharic programmes. Similarly, the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region runs a 30-minute programme in Amharic on Mondays.

While national and regional productions are unrated, hence no restriction of viewing for any particular age group, there are a few programmes specially meant for children and the youth. Apart from foreign cartoon films and motion pictures, some two hours are allotted to children's programmes, of which an hour of programming is made in Amharic while Oromiffa and Tigrinya cover 30 minutes per week each<sup>1</sup>. Overall, ETV as an outlet for both national and regional affairs, television productions appear predominantly to be a serious medium of socio-politico-economic discussions with scant elements of entertainment and international news and information.

### **2.3.2 ETV2 /Addis Ababa Television**

The Addis Ababa Television, also known as ETV2, is the only Addis Ababa-bound Amharic television accessed on a different channel. It does not incur any service or subscription cost

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<sup>1</sup> Source: ETV's list of programmes.

other than the 50 birr per annum service charge that ETV levies on its customers. Excluding daytime repetitions, it runs for one and a half hours per day between 8:30 p.m. and 10:p.m., from Mondays through Saturdays. During this time the national television, ETV, also runs its Amharic programmes. ETV2 also runs programmes from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Sundays.

ETV2 has a two-hour newscast per week. It is not that different from ETV in terms of its coverage of entertainment. Neither is it particularly different in the issues it gives importance to. Given its short transmission time though, the channel gives prominence to art, sports (particularly local and international soccer and athletics) and television drama. For the first two genres some 25 minutes is allotted per week while 30 minutes is set aside for television drama with no commercial break. Peculiarly enough, ETV has now run for long a 30-minute development-oriented documentary series on China<sup>2</sup>.

## **2.4 Transnational Media Received in Ethiopia**

### **2.4.1 Digital Satellite Television (DStv)**

Digital Satellite Television (DStv), a subscription service owned and controlled by MultiChoice Africa, is a South African based Transnational television service (Teer-Tomaselli et al, 2007:155). DStv is the only legitimate subscription-based transnational television received in Ethiopia. MultiChoice Ethiopia operates as the official agent for

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<sup>2</sup> List of programmes for ETV2.

MultiChoice Africa Ltd (interview with Amahasellassie Getachew, Marketing Head, MultiChoice Ethiopia, March, 2007).

The Agent, in its 11-year operation in Ethiopia, claims to have had more than 6000 subscribers, a large number of whom are from Addis Ababa while subscription by residents of big towns is on a significant rise at the same time (interview with Amahasellassie Getachew, March, 2007).

MultiChoice Africa provides fully imported programming from United States, Europe or Asia (e.g. BBC prime, BBC World, Discovery Channel, Hallmark, Al Jazeera, CCTV4, CCTV9) together with locally commissioned programming like O-channel, SABC Africa and Africa Magic. Apart from some forty television channels, DStv brings a Digital Audio Music Channel and five radio services for its full bouquet subscribers. The channels provide a range of options for entertainment and global news media like BBC, CNN, Sky News, Al Jazeera, etc. Tomaselli-Tomaselli (2007) explains that Excepting Canal Horizons, premium bouquet subscribers can have access to all channels in the full bouquet. The French Bouquet subscription excludes M-Net and the Movie Magic Channels. For new bouquet subscribers, five SuperSport channels, Discovery Channel, CNN, MTV, Canal Horizon, ESPN, TV5, TCM and K-Television are available. SuperSport 1-4, TNT classic movies, MTV, CNN, Canal Horizon and TV5 are the only channels for mini-bouquet subscribers. Subscribers of all type need to buy a smart card of worth 328 birr at the time of writing and a standard decoder<sup>3</sup> (see Appendix). Regarding the overall programming

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<sup>3</sup> Price Quotation for Different DStv Bouquet Options and Smart Cards, 2007.

procedures and contents of channels on DStv platform, Teer-Tomaselli (2005: 158) writes the following.

Some of the channels are of international standards, while others are created by their sellers for specific world regions. BBC world, for instance, is a 24-hour entertainment channel offering a selection of the best British domestic programming emanating from the BBC. The line-up of programming is decided by BBC and sold as a package, tailored for different regions of the world, thus obviating the necessity for the carrying satellite service to apply for individual programming rights. CNN too has an international edition tailored for Africa. Foreign language programming in French (including Canel+ and TV5), Italian and German is also available as a standard part of the bouquet, while specialist bouquets, provided for an additional fee, for Indian, Portuguese and Arabic viewers are also available.

In the Ethiopian television broadcasting environment where options for entertainment and serious news channels of global system are limited, DStv seems to have taken advantage of the potentials of digital satellite. As Marden and Verhulst (1999:37) point out, “Digitalization and the compression of technologies upon which it relies, promise of an entirely new look and feel to traditional television including channel quantity and picture quality”. Nevertheless, the subscription fee for DStv channels is expensive and this

justifies the small number of subscribers despite its existence in the Ethiopian television landscape for more than a decade now.

**Table 2.1 Subscription Fee Schedule**

Types	3 months	6 months	12 months
Full bouquet	\$ 216	\$ 432	\$ 864
Premium bouquet	\$ 177	\$ 354	\$ 708
French bouquet	\$ 174	\$ 348	\$ 696
New bouquet	\$ 144	\$ 288	\$ 576
Mini bouquet	\$ 129	\$ 258	\$ 516

*Source: MultiChoice Ethiopia*

#### **2.4.2 ArabSat**

ArabSat is a free-to-air television system, thus making it difficult to find demographic information for the service. However, a mere observation shows the number of its users appears to be far greater than DStv subscribers. The market price for ArabSat accessories and installation (at the time of writing) ranges between 1450 birr (about \$ 160) to 1750 birr (about \$ 200 birr). In fact \$ 200 enables the purchasing of both free-to-air accessories

and a decoder which allows to illegally access to some, if not all, DStv provisions as far as users manage to buy only the smart card from DStv<sup>4</sup>.

Estimated to have plus or minus 180 channels, as some new channels emerge while others close, ArabSat carries tremendous options of entertainment and global media. However, it does not bring the big European soccer leagues for which the Ethiopian youth as well as adults crowd city houses and cafés of DStv subscribers who provide pay services. Moreover, ArabSat provides a number of regional and national programming in Arabic for the Middle East and African nations like Egypt, Tunisia, Eritrea and Sudan. Many viewers hardly understand the Arabic language.

## **2.5 Legal Provisions for National and Local Television Broadcasting**

Proclamation No. 34/1992, a Proclamation to provide for the freedom of the press, has ensured that freedom of the press is recognized and censorship and other restrictions of similar nature are prohibited (Art. 3/1-2). However, the same proclamation obliges any registered press or media to “obtain a license issued by the Minister of Information or, in the case of any press whose circulation is confined within the limits of regional self-government, by the Information Bureau of the regional self-government” ( Article 7/1). One may reasonably ask why the Ministry of Information or a regional Information Bureau is preferred to, for example, the Ministry of Justice or Ministry of Trade and Industry if a

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Arif Abdulkadir, commercial Head, OPSUN, Agent for ArabSat Accessories.

license is required for tax and/or regulation-related purposes and not for conducting unfair checks on media owners and their activities. Moreover, the enforcement of proclamation 178/99 gave way for the establishment of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency (now Authority) “to regulate, not only a state electronic media, but also the private electronic media” and it is less liberal than Proclamation 34/1992 enacted prior to it and which was “a radical departure from the past in that it created for the first time [...] a legal framework enabling the private sector to engage itself in the [...] media industry without any state agency controlling its activities” (Andargachew, unpublished:13). Given the illiberal culture of the country’s politics, Andargachew argues that by using the legal power vested in them to appoint their functionaries, such agencies can be filled “with party members who are enthusiastic about imposing the whims of the ruling party” (ibid).

Proclamation 34/92 provides, under Article 8/4 that the Board of the Ethiopian Radio and Television Organization need to “ensure that political organizations and public are allocated equitable radio and television time”. This provision does not set a specific time of when this should be allowed, thereby suggesting that the state media should give equitable space for opposition views all the time. However, Proclamation 178/99 that followed it has limited this provision to election times alone (Article 40/1.4).

The 1999 Broadcasting Proclamation has remained to be the most important legal document of provisions for national, regional and local broadcasting services in general and television broadcasting in particular. Defined under Article 2/2 as “a radio or

television transmission programme conducted to educate, inform or entertain the public,” broadcasting services can have differing levels of geographical coverage. Article 21/1 of this proclamation has it that “[a] broadcasting station may be established with a capacity of nation wide, regional or local basis” (1999:1122). Upgrading the capacity of regional and local transmissions is possible only when the Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency (now Authority), a government controlling body of the broadcast sector, gives its consent.

Regarding the duration of broadcasting license, Article 23/1-3 provides that national, regional and local television broadcasting licenses remain in force for ten, twelve and fourteen years respectively. “Where the transmission is limited to Dire Dawa which is accountable to the federal government”, license for television broadcasting remains active for twelve years, and “where the transmission is limited to Addis Ababa and its surrounding”, it stays functional for a duration of ten years with possible renewal in all cases (Article 23/4-5:1122).

While dealing with this research project, a new Broadcasting Service Proclamation (Proclamation No. 533/2007) has been approved by majority parliament vote. The proclamation provides for the establishment of national, regional and local transmission programmes of government, commercial or community broadcasting (Article 32/1-3). Accordingly, any national, regional and local transmission programmes shall allocate at least 60% of their weekly transmissions to national programmes. Of the 60% of national programming by a regional broadcaster, “40% shall be allocated to programmes that relate

to the affairs of the region” (Article 32/2). Similarly, of the 60% of national programming, “20% shall be allocated to programmes that relate to the local affairs” (Article 32/3).

In this latest proclamation, one of the basic additions has to do with the provisions of distinct definitions for different types of media such as Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), Commercial Broadcasting and Community Broadcasting (Article 2/9-11). Accordingly, Public Broadcasting Service is defined as “a radio or television transmission service established for the purpose of educating, informing and entertaining the public, in the federal or regional state to which government budget is allocated and is accountable to the Federal or Regional Peoples Representatives Council” (Article 2/9). Commercial Broadcasting, on the other hand, is defined to be “a radio or television transmission service established for profit by a legal entity with the purpose of informing, educating or entertaining the public (Article 2/10). Similarly, Community Broadcasting Service “means a non-profit radio or television transmission service established by the will and interest of a community living in a specific area or who possess a common interest” (Article 2/11).

While significant changes are made in the new broadcast proclamation (Proc. 533/2007), the reasons behind making these changes are not explicitly stated. However, according to Desta Tesfaw, Deputy Director General of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority, the amendment is justified by the need to make a clear definition between the different types of media establishments (The Reporter Saturday June 30, 2007, English private weekly.) Indeed, not only the new proclamation defined types of media, it also added public broadcasting service into its scope of application. But again, there is another major shift in

terms of the accountability of the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority in that it is no more accountable to the Prime Minister of the country but to the Ministry of Information hereafter.

Concerns are raised in this particular change because additional power is vested in the Ministry of Information (MoI), the government's spokesperson, and this potentially threatens the Authority's independence. The Saturday, June 16<sup>th</sup> 2007 issue of *The Reporter*, a private English weekly, wrote in its editorial that:

[T]he most alarming aspect of the new broadcasting law is its designating of the Ministry of Information as the organization to whom the broadcasting authority is accountable. The authority should have been made accountable to parliament. The now repealed eight-year old broadcasting law was roundly criticized for making the authority accountable to the prime minister on the ground that that it robbed of its independence. To make matters worse, nowadays its boss is the Ministry of Information. An institution which served as the government's spokesperson has now been empowered to regulate how private electronic media are supposed to act as 'spokespersons' for other institutions. This is tantamount to appointing the Captain of a team that played in a match as that match's umpire also.

Moreover, Proclamation 533/2007 clearly promulgates under Article 44/1-2 that the Authority has an unconditional power of inspection which enables it to "assign inspectors to ensure the compliance of provisions of this proclamation..." and the assigned inspector "shall have the power to enter and inspect a broadcasting service organization during working hours" when she/he may "examine any broadcasting instruments, refer to relevant documents and demand a copy thereof."

Article 34 provides for the proposition that the allocation of a given percentage of transmissions be done solely by the regulator and no consideration is made to the interest and consent of the broadcaster.

## **2.6 Legal Provisions for Transnational Television**

In Ethiopia, there have been no legal provisions for the licensing of transnational media. While foreign broadcasters like DStv, are subject to taxation, they have not been regulated with regard to their type of programming and their over all operation in the country. Just as this research work was underway though, the draft 'Directive for License Issuance to Foreign Broadcasting Services' prepared by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority has gained approval by the Board of the Authority. This document states that regulating these media has been found important to follow up and control the operations of alternative media in accountable and transparent manner.

Moreover, the regulation is justified by the need to verify the efficiency of agents of foreign broadcasters already under operation and others who would like to engage in the business (page 1). As its main objective, the Directive has it that it aims to make the foreign broadcasting services function in the manner that their programming does not go at odds with the country's relevant laws and the public interest (page 2). Any applicant for providing foreign broadcast media products will be required to fill out an application form which has such entries as applicant's name and address, programme types, language and

country in which the programs are made and number of subscribers if the service is already under provision (page 3). The duties and responsibilities of a licensee include:

1. Ensuring that the programming does not conflict with the country's laws and public interest;
2. Notifying subscription fees and any changes in these fees to the Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency (EBA);
3. Notifying number, type and contents of channel(s) to EBA;
4. Providing the programmes to EBA free of charge;
5. Providing only services the provider is entitled by way of license;
6. Securing the Authority's permission for channels other than those the provider is licensed for;
7. Allowing the Authority's supervision of location and working equipment whenever requested;
8. Notifying number of subscribers and duration of agreements between the service provider and the subscriber to the Authority; and
9. Signing into an agreement with the subscriber that he/she is not to allow public viewership of the programmes (page 4).

Licenses issued in line with these regulations are to remain active for a period of ten years, and renewal needs to be applied for six months before expiry date. Failure to comply with the provisions of the Broadcast Proclamation (Proclamation No. 178/99) can elicit service

banning (page 4-5). Regarding charges the service provider must pay to the Authority, the regulation provides that the licensee pay application fee and license fee that amount to 1000 (one thousand) birr and 50,000 (fifty thousand) birr respectively. Besides, the licensee is to pay 100 (one hundred) birr per subscriber per annum (page 6).

## **2.7 The Media/Cultural Imperialism Theory**

The media imperialism thesis had shaped the 1970s and early 1980s research in international communications. While earlier models of modernisation assumed mutuality of interests between the developed and the Third World countries, the cultural imperialist thesis took a position that the latter occupy an inferior economic and political position “structured according to the needs of the developed countries” (Strelitz, 2005:34). The cultural imperialism thesis in fact argued that developing nations hardly benefited from the global flows of technology transfer and mediated cultural products. As Rantanen (2005:24) rather puts it, “media and communications were seen as powerful...since they could threaten the cultural independence of these countries”.

Similarly, Herman and McChesney (1997:152) write that the cultural imperialism model claimed that “the economic and cultural power of the media and cultural artefacts of the United States and other Western powers [...] put into a dependency relationship the media and cultures of less economically advanced countries”. In the prevalent globalization process rapidly intensifying in the last two decades, “the media are not intermediaries of economy, politics and culture but are themselves central operators within their own

commercial interests. Thus, within globalization, there is also media globalization influencing other aspects of globalization (Carlsson, U. & Feilitzen, C., 2002: 13).

Crystal (2007: 1) defines the notion of media imperialism as “a theory stating that smaller countries are losing their identity due to the force-feeding of media from larger nations. It can be equated to small community shops closing down due to large superstores moving in, taking over and having a monopoly.” He further posits that the media of larger nations are criticized for their blanket coverage of the world’s events by their often biased information and inaccuracy within news stories.

Due to its dominance in the global media landscape, the United States is generally perceived to be the most influential power in the field with its cultural products prevailing in all forms of media in general and in the highly concentrated transnational television programming. Rothkop (1997:6) points to a typical American interest in the move toward a global culture encouraging the development of a world in which:

[t]he fault line separating nations are bridged by shared interests. And it is in the economic and political interests of the United States to ensure that if the world is moving toward a common language, it be English; that if the world is moving toward common telecommunications, safety and quality, they be American; that if the world is becoming linked by television, radio, and music, the programming be American;

and that if common values are being developed, they be values with which Americans are comfortable.

Such wide-ranging American interests were argued to have been served through the global media largely based in the United States and that have increasingly operated similar types of programming (Sreberry-Mohammed, et al., 1996). According to Friedman (1994) in Tomlinson (1999:79), the discourse of cultural imperialism regards the process of receiving Western culture through the global media as an “aspect of the hierarchical nature of imperialism, that is, the increasing hegemony of particular central cultures, the diffusion of American values, consumer goods and life styles.”

This trend of cultural imperialism arguably results in a number of adverse effects on other countries, especially on third world societies. The first one relates to values whereby the spirits of community and social world are beaten in the face of individualism and commercialization sharpened by the global market place for cultural products. Secondly, the sole intent of profit maximization on the part of the media necessitates programming to be largely advertisement and entertainment oriented; that makes it difficult to enhance the public sphere through the presentation of in-depth news and public affairs analyses. The third concern has to do with the tendency of the media to back conservative political forces that serve the interests of transnational corporations. In essence, the media become hostile to social democratic options that attempt to address increasing inequalities of income and wealth. Last but not least is the erosion of local cultures the intensity of which,

however, depends on the strength of the indigenous forces of resistance (Herman and McChesney, 1997: 153-154).

## 2.8 Critiques of Media/ Cultural Imperialism Theory

The Cultural Imperialism thesis has been severely criticized for its overstated assumption of the maximum direct effect of media products disregarding the interpretation of messages by the recipient in line with own cultural experiences. The interpretations of the sender do not necessarily coincide with that of the receiver (Herman and McChesney 1997, Strelitz 2005, Ginneken, 1998). Summarizing the critical look into the theory, Herman and McChesney (1997:152) write that the criticism is

grounded intellectually in the receding proportion of cross-border cultural flows coming from the United States, along with numerous microanalyses showing that readers and viewers pick and choose what they want to hear or read and interpret imported materials from their own frames of reference.

Similarly, Tomlinson writes that the cultural imperialism thesis has a problem in that it assumes the simple presence of cultural goods in the media will have deeper cultural and ideological effects on the recipient. He then summarizes that:

Culture simply does not transfer in this unilinear way. Movement between cultural/geographical areas always involves interpretation, translation, mutation, adaptation, and

‘indigenization’ as the receiving culture brings its own cultural resources to bear (1998:84).

Furthermore, Chan (1997: 103) sees the great potentials of internationalized television in homogenizing culture at a regional level which is not always undesirable. He does not, however, rule out that “cultural imperialism is particularly strong when satellite television’s programming originates in the West.” Similarly critiquing the idea of relating globalization to world wide homogenizing effect of television, the erosion of national and cultural heterogeneity, and the domination of North American productions, Straubhaar (1997:285) suggests that “in terms of media and media flows, a more significant phenomenon than the idea of globalization, per se, may well be the ‘regionalization’ of television into multi-country markets linked by geography, language and culture.”

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the overall picture of the Ethiopian television landscape with particular focus on the legal and ownership perspectives. Brief description is also provided on the general nature of local television programming. In describing the television landscape of Ethiopia, the Cultural Imperialism thesis has been deemed relevant in the sense that, considering the highly non-competitive local television scene in the face of urban viewers’ increasing exposure to transnational television, it can have a bearing on the way audiences make sense of particularly transnational media messages. Thus, apart from exploring the state of local television broadcasting and audience reactions to it, consumption of foreign television among college youth is to be investigated to sort out how

the cultural imperialism theory is pertinent to foreign television viewing amongst the youth. In order to gather data in this line, different methods within the qualitative research tradition are designed. These methods are described in the next chapter together with sampling techniques employed, and the introduction of respondents recruited.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The choice of methodology and specific methods in a research undertaking depends mainly on their appropriateness in being able to answer the research question. However, it does not necessarily mean that methods of data collection “resemble, or follow by logical deduction from, the research questions.... There is no way to mechanically “convert” research question into methods” (Maxwell, 2005:91). The selection of methods, therefore, depends not only on the research question but also on the situation that helps the researcher collect his/her data effectively (ibid). The present chapter attempts to highlight the basic intellectual foundations of qualitative research, justify the methods used to collect data and introduce the respondents involved in the research.

#### 3.2 Qualitative Research

In the collection and analysis of data, the qualitative research tradition emphasizes words rather than quantification. As a research strategy, it is constructionist, derived through a process of induction, although it is not always the case that qualitative researchers subscribe to all these features at the same time (Bryman, 2004:266). Qualitative research is committed to seeing the social world from the actor’s perspective. In this research tradition, there is a preference “for a contextual understanding so that behaviour is to be

understood in the context of meaning systems employed by a particular group or society” (Bryman, 1984:78).

In mapping the television landscape of Ethiopia, this thesis mainly takes a perspective of what sense audiences make of local and transnational media products. In other words, the description of the television environment in Ethiopia has been approached from the recipients’ perspective for which qualitative research can be an appropriate choice. Focus in qualitative research lies in examining people’s interpretation of their social world. In fact, the interpretive approach to qualitative research is concerned “not with establishing relations of cause and effect but exploring the way that people make sense of their social worlds and how they express these understandings through language, sound [... and] personal lifestyle”(Deacon, et.al., 199:13). The qualitative research tradition as a whole “describes reality as experienced by the respondents” (Sarantakos, 1998:6). At the same time, secondary sources like relevant proclamations and directives were consulted, and television broadcasters and journalists were explored through individual and group discussions as a means of describing the landscape in a holistic manner.

### **3.2.1 Philosophical Underpinnings**

Unlike objects of analysis of natural sciences, subjects of social sciences, i.e. people, attribute meaning to events and their environment (Bryman, 2004:279). Hence there is a need to pursue a different methodology with due consideration of people’s difference from objects of natural sciences. “As a result, many qualitative researchers express a commitment

to viewing events and the social world through the eyes of the people they study” (ibid). As Christians and Carey in Strelitz (2005:4) write:

Qualitative studies start from the assumption that in studying humans we are examining a creative process whereby people produce and maintain forms of life and society and systems of meaning and value. This creative activity is grounded in the ability to build cultural forms from symbols that express this will to live and assert meaning. Humans live by interpretation.

Through the look into the ‘insider’ perspective, a qualitative researcher attempts to understand social behaviour in its social context in stead of viewing, as a quantitative researcher often does, events from outside and imposing “empirical concerns upon social reality” (ibid).

Accordingly, this study is mainly interested in exploring the meaning television audiences make out of their consumption of local as well as transnational television programmes. Though not through direct observation of their viewing experiences, their perspective of understanding the media products that they come into contact with will be analysed through their reactions to the probing interview guides the researcher will centre pertinent issues around. The focus group and individual in-depth interview arrangements are believed to create appropriate contexts for the researcher to exploit the ‘insider’ perspective of his participants so as to address the chief philosophical underpinning of the qualitative research paradigm.

### 3.2.2 Goals of Qualitative Research

Maxwell (2005:22-23) has identified five intellectual goals qualitative studies are especially suited for. The first one is the understanding of the meaning which relates to the researcher's endeavours to perceive the events, situations and experiences people are involved with. In qualitative research, Maxwell (2005:22) establishes the researcher "is interested not only in the physical events and behaviour that are taking place, but in how the participants [...] make sense of these, and how their understanding influences their behaviour." In this line, this research is fairly audience-focus and it necessitates the exploration of meaning and understanding that audiences make out of their television exposure not just from what they say but also from how they say it and how they verbally or non-verbally (by way of gestures) react to discussions in a focus group.

The second goal has to do with the need for the researcher to understand how the context within which the participants act influences their actions. Particularity of a given context is very important for qualitative researchers as they study smaller number of individuals or situations aiming to "preserve the individuality of each of these in their analyses" and then they attempt to figure out "how events, actions and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which these occur". Relating the understanding of context to this particular study, the group and in-depth individual interviews and the situations in which they occur will be examined to understand the reactions of participants in a given context. In other words, debates and discussions in a group dynamics would elicit a fairly deep understanding of how participants act or react under a given circumstance. So do

individual interviews which are appropriate techniques in being able to get personal feelings and opinions.

The other goal is identifying unanticipated phenomena. As a result of its inherent characteristics of openness and flexibility, qualitative research may lead to the researcher's modification of his/her design and new discoveries and relationships of research variables. Obviously, this researcher understands that whatever prior assumptions or designs he has developed, these may change in due course of the study owing to the flexible nature of qualitative research.

Fourthly, qualitative research gives way for the understanding of the process by which events and actions take place. The method has this great quality of enabling the researcher to determine processes that led to outcomes, "processes that experimental and survey research are often poor at identifying."

Last but not least, qualitative research is important for developing causal explanations. Maxwell argues that although it is a different type from quantitative research, qualitative research can explain causal relations as effectively as quantitative research does. However, with the use of qualitative research, we tend to answer the question of how  $x$  plays a role in causing  $y$  and what connects these variables, while through quantitative research, we are more interested in "whether and to what extent variance in  $x$  causes variance in  $y$ " (Maxwell, 2005:23). Particularly with the fifth goal, this research is believed to highlight how the

situation of local television plays a role in sustaining audiences' gross appreciation of Western cultural products they access from global media.

### **3.3 Data Gathering Procedure and Sampling**

The research is a type that attempts to highlight the meanings that audiences make out of their media consumption and then define the television landscape from that very angle. Therefore, data were collected from focus group and in-depth interview arrangements. Given the time constraint and that the research exercise basically attempts to define the types of television broadcasting services and legal provisions, and not that of content in detail, even qualitative content analysis was neither feasible nor desirable.

The consultation of secondary data relevant to broadcast regulation has been very vital in exploring the legal side of the equation in this research. While examining the previously major legal document, the 1999 broadcast proclamation, another replacement emerged. As it is relevant in describing the television landscape in Ethiopia up until now, Proclamation 178/99 is still more important for this project. However, in cases of vital additions and changes, the latest broadcast proclamation is consulted so as to throw light on what the legal environment of broadcasting in general and television in particular will be like in the future.

### 3.3.1 Focus Group Interview

Discovering the meaning attributed by audiences to cultural productions, such as television programmes, can be achieved qualitatively by allowing oneself a position of participant observation or through conducting interviews. However, “problems of access often rule out any extended use of” participant observation “for the study of their ‘natural’ home environment”. Thus, “semi-structured interviews or semi-structured group interviews are research approaches which allow potentially much richer [...] type[s] of data on the dynamics of audiences and their relation to media” (Hansen, 1998:259-60). In media studies, focus group interviews have proven useful to elicit audiences’ experiences of media content, sometimes together with other methods (Jensen, 2002:241).

Focus group studies in media research are seldom representative of the general population. Rather, they take significant dimensions of selected groups to see the way in which people use and interpret media content. In addition, “audience studies using focus group methodology have often aimed to draw participants from ‘naturally’ existing groups or communities, which exist independently of the research” (Hansen, 1998: 264). Respondents were sampled based on the type of television which they subscribe or have access to. Accordingly, segmented first in terms of gender (male versus female), they were then grouped into homogenous categories of DSTV subscribers, those with access to Arabsat channels and viewers of local television. Also a heterogeneous focus group of six broadcast students was arranged in search of more professional outlooks. With total participants of 35 college students sampled purposively, and with interrogations and subsequent

discussions made flexibly, an in-depth examination of meanings participants make out of their media consumption experiences will be undertaken. Naturally, generalizability and representativeness are neither achievable nor desirable in this type of research.

### **3.3.2 Individual In-depth Interview**

In-depth interviews are popular in the field of research for their effectiveness in giving a human face to research problems. They can be rewarding for both participants and the interviewer in that “for participants [...] in-depth interviews offer the opportunity to express themselves in a way ordinary life affords them. For their part, interviewers [...] are offered the privilege of having people who are virtually strangers entrust them with a glimpse into their personal lives”. Useful for learning about individual perspectives, in-depth interviews are effective for getting people to talk about their personal feelings, opinions, and experiences. Besides, they help the researcher to gain insight into how people interpret and order the world. “We can accomplish this by being attentive to the causal explanations participants provide for what they have experienced and believe and by actively probing them about the connections and relationships they see between particular events, phenomena, and beliefs”(Natasha, 2005:29). In-depth interviews were then conducted with purposively selected members of focus groups apart from individual interviews with an official of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority and a News Center Head with ETV.

### **3.4 Sampling**

There is no serious claim of representativeness of any population and generalizability of findings in this research. Samples were taken purposively from government and private colleges and universities for convenience as the researcher assumed that, apart from their being relatively easy to access and organize; respondents from higher institution can have better understanding of the implications of having access to global media and critically react to the overall television broadcasting situations in the country. It is also presumed that all types of television viewers the research inquiry attempts to take into account would be available in these institutions. With Kokeb Technology and Business College and Microlink Information College, classroom teachers asked their students which media they access to and recruited volunteer discussants for my project. With Addis Ababa University, snowball sampling was employed to access DStv as well as local television viewers. Particularly with those having access to DStv, the sampling technique was useful as the service is relatively expensive and subscribers were not easy to access in the selected colleges.

### **3.5 The Interview Questions**

As repeatedly mentioned, audiences are the focal perspective which this research exercise attempts to answer the research questions from. Therefore, it is of importance to give respondents the chance to react freely to questions relevant to the research inquiry. To this end, semi-structured interview questions were administered in the interview sessions with the respondents. Semi-structured interviews are a type of interview “where the interviewer

has worked out a set of questions in advance, but is free to modify based upon her perception of what seems most appropriate in the context of the ‘conversation’ (Robinson, 1993:230). Accordingly, distinct interview guides were designed, one for transnational television viewers (DStv, Arabsat) another for audiences of local television (ETV and ETV2). Both guides included personal details that have to do with age, gender and parents’ occupational and experiential status to determine indirectly the relationship between access to subscription-based media and income. More important groupings of categories have also been made along the lines of warm-up questions, viewers’ reason to watch a particular television outlet, viewers’ reaction to lack of access to global media and viewers’ subjective evaluation of a given television service. In the case of transnational media consumers, additional categories have been made in relation to changes of viewing habits after subscription, cultural domination of the West (cultural imperialism), and difference among family members in their programme/channel preferences.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the methodological approaches to be used in this thesis have been outlined. The researcher will utilize a qualitative perspective since it is most appropriate to examine and interpret meanings audiences make out of their exposure to media messages. Taking advantage the flexible traits of qualitative methods, it will be possible to adapt interaction with the study participants in such a manner that the researcher gets elaborate and detail responses which will allow him to provide a fairly thick description of actions

and the situation in which they occur from the very perspective of the research participants themselves.

The techniques that will be employed in the study include the analysis of secondary sources, focus group discussions, individual in-depth interviews. The results of the investigation are to be presented and analysed in the next chapter and it is believed on the part of the researcher that they highlight the overall television landscape of Ethiopia and answer the research questions asked at the outset. It should be noted once again that the findings are not generalizable given the non-representative sample taken and the qualitative approach followed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the argument was made that a qualitative research approach, using the methodological techniques of focus groups and in-depth interviews, was the most appropriate way of approaching the research question. Accordingly, the researcher has interviewed a total of 29 university/college students apart from six broadcast students from the Mass Media Training Institute under the Faculty of Journalism and Communication, Addis Ababa University. Fifteen of them are female. The male focus group discussion (FGD) for those with DStv access at home had to be done with only three students because the other three missed appointments repeatedly.

The age range for female students has come out to be between 18 and 30, and for male students, it is between 18 and 27. Except two teenagers from each gender category and one 30-year old lady, all the student audience respondents are in their twenties. The male audience respondents are unmarried while two among the female are married.

Seven female and four male audience respondents are either employed or run family businesses while all others are unemployed students. The Focus Group composed of four

male and two female broadcast journalists included two ETV journalists and another journalist from the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA).

Except for the married women, all respondents having access to DStv or ArabSat said that their parents covered the subscription fee and the expense to install ArabSat accessories. At least one of the parents of each respondent either does some professional work or he/she runs some business.

Once written out in full the following phrases were coded as presented in the table below.

**Table 4.1 Coding abbreviations used in research transcripts**

ETV	Ethiopian Television
FG	Focus Group
II	In-depth Interview
FGD1	Focus Group Discussion with female students at Microlink Information College having ArabSat access at home
FGD2	Focus Group Discussion with male students at Microlink Information College having ArabSat access at home
FGD3	Focus Group Discussion with female students at Addis Ababa University having only local television access at home
FGD4	Focus Group Discussion with male students at Addis Ababa University having only local television access at home
FGD5	Focus Group Discussion with male students at Addis Ababa University having DStv access at home

FGD6	Focus Group Discussion with female students at Kokeb Technology College having ArabSat access at home
FGD7	Focus Group Discussion with male students at Kokeb Technology College having ArabSat access at home
FGD8	Focus Group Discussion with journalists and broadcast journalism students at Mass Media Training Institute
II1	In-depth Interview with a member of the female FG at Microlink Information College having ArabSat access at home
II2	In-depth Interview with a member of the male FG at Microlink Information College having ArabSat access at home
II3	In-depth Interview with a member of the female FG at Addis Ababa University having only local television access at home
II4	In-depth Interview with a member of the male FG at Addis Ababa University having only local television access at home
II5	In-depth Interview with a member of the male FG at Addis Ababa University having DStv access at home
II6	In-depth Interview with a member of the female FG at Kokeb Technology College having ArabSat access at home
II7	In-depth Interview with a member of the male FG at Kokeb Technology College having ArabSat access at home

## 4.2 The Legal Framework of the Ethiopian Television Landscape

### 4.2.1 Local Television

The legal environment for broadcasting media in general and local television in particular does not appear to be dynamic in the positive sense. The breakthrough that came into being with the emergence of highly liberal provisions under Proclamation 34/92 did not

materialize as this proclamation had to be overshadowed by the less liberal Proclamation 178/99 provided particularly for the broadcast sector.

Accordingly, Proclamation 114/92 which was endorsed during the transitional government provided that the Board of the Ethiopian radio and Television Agency has the responsibility to “ensure that political organizations and public are allocated equitable radio and television time” (Article 8/4). This rather broad provision had to later be restricted by Proclamation 178/99 which, under its Article 40/1, stated that “[E]very broadcaster shall allocate free air time, for political parties and candidates registered in accordance with the relevant law, to publicize their objectives and programmes to the people or transmit statements *during election time* (emphasis mine).” Particularly for government media, this later proclamation may be used as an excuse not to treat views and political platforms of parties and individuals that are opponent to that of the government. Seeing Proclamation 178/99 within the context of commercial broadcast media, however, the demand of the provision for these media to allocate free air time for political parties and individual candidates significantly meddles in their editorial independence as well as their commercial interest. As it stands, Proclamation 178/99 does not distinguish between the different types of media in which case even an entirely entertainment media interested in running sport shows and movies, for example, shall allocate time for election campaigns. Practically though, there has never been such a commercial television that we did not witness how the demands of the proclamation would be met.

The latest Proclamation on Broadcasting Service (Proclamation No. 533/2007) which has just repealed Proclamation No. 178/99 can be reviewed in two ways. On the one hand, unlike the now repealed Proclamation No. 178/99, it has well distinguished between the different types of media, namely government, commercial and community broadcasting services. This broader scope of application of Proclamation No. 533/ 2007 has clearly indicated that the Ethiopian broadcast law allows the establishment of all three main types of broadcasting services.

On the other hand, despite their underlining differences in their objectives, all types of broadcast services are made to be governed by the same requirements in the legislation. Accordingly, Article 32/1-3 declares that:

1. Any national transmission program shall allocate 60% of its weekly transmissions to national programs.
2. Any regional transmission program shall allocate 60% of its weekly transmissions to national programs of which 40% shall be allocated to programs that relate to the affairs of the region.
3. Any local transmission program shall allocate 60% of its weekly transmissions to national programs of which 20% shall be allocated to programs that relate to the local affairs.

While these provisions may be meant to intensify the treatment of affairs of national or local relevance, they can, however, limit editorial independence and underestimate

commercial justifications particularly for commercial broadcasting services. Considering the chief objective of commercial broadcasting services, which is profit-making, the Proclamation would have done justice by at least providing some percentage differences in relation to the generalized requirements presented above. That would then enable commercial media to get more chances to work on a wider set of options to run profitable programmes done on affairs of wider or narrower geography in response to market demands.

Another critical issue would be the absence of clear distinction in the new proclamation between government and public broadcasting services. . As defined under Article 2/9, ‘public broadcasting service’ means “a radio or television transmission service established, for the purpose of educating, informing and entertaining the public, in the federal or regional state to which government budget is allocated and is accountable to the Federal or Regional Peoples Representative Council.” Then one may reasonably ask what else government broadcasting service is. Unfortunately, the new proclamation supplies no definition whatsoever to government broadcasting service. In the scope of application under Article 3, the proclamation is said to “be applicable to *government*, commercial and community broadcasting services established within Ethiopia” (emphasis mine). Going by the scope, we can argue that the law is not applicable to public broadcasting services. But public broadcasting service is defined in the document while government broadcasting service is not.

Thus, under the circumstances, there appears to be an interchangeable use of government and public broadcasting services. The argument of the Public Relations Head with the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority mentioned elsewhere might as well have emanated from this understanding. It is evident that the regulator, EBA, has preferred to take the government media like ETV as public broadcasting service. Following the approval of Proclamation 533/2007, the Deputy Director of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency, Desta Tesfaw, called a press conference on June 26, 2007 at his office in defence of criticisms by some media on the new law. Then he chose to use the term 'state broadcasting' while listing down the three types of broadcasting services and according to him state broadcasting "is established and financed by the government and the public" (The Reporter Saturday, June 30, 2007, English private weekly). This is another proof of inclination on the part of the regulator to believe that no government media exist in the Ethiopian broadcasting landscape.

#### **4.2.2 Problems Related to EBA's Accountability**

The regulator for broadcast media, EBA, is not only a government establishment but it was also accountable to the Prime Minister's Office until the emergence of latest proclamation (Proclamation No. 533/2007) which has empowered the Ministry of Information so as to make the regulator accountable to it. Besides EBA's Director General and Deputy Director General shall be appointed by the Government upon recommendation by the Minister of Information (Articles 12/1 and 13/1). Still further, the Director General of the Authority shall be a member and secretary of the Board while

other members shall still be appointed by the Government upon recommendation by the Minister (Article 9/2-3).

Vividly enough, Government has an absolute involvement in both the top management structure of the broadcasting Authority and its accountability. In a situation where there are no strong press or media associations of any form in the country, cases of misuse of Government power in the regulatory body may be hardly challenged. Andargachew's (2006: 14) argument that, using the power vested in them by the Government, such bodies like EBA may fill the regulatory institution "with party members who are enthusiastic about imposing the whims of the ruling party" is justifiable.

#### **4.2.3 Discouraging Commercial Television Scene**

Despite the availability of sufficient legal ground for the establishment of commercial television, not even one of such type is launched, thus government media prevailing in a non-competitive environment. According to the Public Relation Head with EBA, his Authority is not at the moment well capacitated to work towards the flourishing of commercial television. He emphasized more on the research work helping the allocation of frequency, which he said is a scarce resource, in a workable manner before the actual issuance of license to private television<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Interview held in June, 2007.

Considering the Government's commitment as early as 1995 to have crafted a Constitution with substantial embodiments of tenets of democracy including freedom of expression, it is difficult to justify the prevalence of Government television alone. This has been so in a situation where transnational television is accessed by a sizable urban audience developing an increasing avoidance of local television. It can fairly be argued that the poor local television scene has added to the youth's growing inclination towards American media products coming via transnational and free-to-air television outlets as well as by way of cinema and, VCD and DVD records.

To make matters worse, EBA has no short term plan to untap the potential of commercial television broadcasting. While it envisions intensifying the already predominant government television by issuing licenses to regional states, it, on the other hand, plans to give licence only to one commercial television in a period of four years from now (Four-Year Strategic Plan of EBA, 2006). One may reasonably wonder whether the Government has a deep suspicion to private television ownership which, otherwise, is potentially a rich sector capable of offering broader dimensions of options to television viewers at a local level.

### **4.3 Thematic Analysis and Discussion of Findings of FGDs and IIs**

#### **4.3.1 Viewing Habits**

Most respondents under the category of ETV viewers, i.e. those who have access to only ETV at home, said that they did not have specific habits that related to watching ETV.

They often watch it with other family members and with no serious attention to programmes other than such 'slightly' entertaining shows or programmes as Ethiopian Idol, *Hibre Trit* (Music shows, mostly local, and some short comic scenes and dramas on ETV) and Talk Sport and the Saturday night dramas on Addis Ababa Television (ETV2).

The interview as well as FGD results indicated that ETV programmes are not of types that grab attention. Physical presence in front of switched-on television does not often mean watching the programmes seriously. One of the discussants of FGD3 explained: "Because my parents need to watch ETV news, I sit and watch the news with no interest. Just with Saturday night drama on ETV2, we all mean real watching".

On the other hand, ArabSat and DStv viewers said they had many programmes they deliberately watch with huge interest. Most of them interrupt their long time tuning in during the evening while parents or elderly family members switch channels to local programs such as news, shows like *Hamsa Lomi*, and *Africa Journal*. Of all the discussants, only five (three female and two male) said they cared to watch with some interest local programmes such as *Hibre Trit*, *Sport News*, and dramas in the evening together with their parents and elderly family members. For all of them, viewing local television with the whole family getting together and with no inclination to foreign channels came in occasional live transmissions of running races in which Ethiopian athletes took part. For some others, live imports of European soccer by the local television (ETV) would create such a family viewing scene. In general, the results from the focus group discussions and

in-depth interviews revealed that students with access to only local television largely engage in passive viewing except for a few programmes to their interest while viewers with home access to transnational television are often engaged in serious viewing as they pay a lot of interest in many programmes including movies, talk shows, music, sports and so on.

### 4.3.2 Why Watch Television?

#### A. ETV Viewers

All ETV viewers included in focus group discussions and in-depth interviews similarly responded that they watch local television because they do not have other options. Otherwise, they attached little rationale behind their tuning in as far as what they benefit from local television programmes. One discussant from FGD3 (D) stated that “it is to have some chat with my family that I tolerate the TV on there”.

However, some students said they took interest in a few local television programmes. Interestingly, most of them expressed appreciation to similar shows that included *Ethiopian Idol*, Saturday evening dramas on ETV2, *Hibre Trit*, and *Shay Buna* (Tea-Coffee, as in talks or chats while having some coffee or tea). Male respondents added sports news to the list.

While the respondents attached some entertaining quality to one or the other shows in the above list, they particularly admired *Shay Buna* for its educative attributions. An FGD6(B) discussant expressed her “respect and appreciation for *Shay Buna* talk show for its

discussion of big ideas that have to do with the social and cultural problems of the country” though she watches it occasionally. Similarly, an FGD4(C) respondent believed that he had come to know a lot about the complications of social problems “we Ethiopians find ourselves in,” and the recommendations from participants of the show were “very useful inputs for attempts made to resolve these problems”. He also pointed out that success stories of participants with poor economic backgrounds could teach the unemployed poor. Another FGD3(A) discussant stated that she liked *Shay Buna* for its treatment of interesting social issues, “which is good for mental exercise”. Similar reactions were made by some three focus group discussants to *Hamsa Lomi* (50 Lemons).

## **B. ArabSat/DStv Viewers**

Almost all the respondents under this category viewed these transnational television outlets as providers of whatever it was that they need from television services as television audiences. Only male ArabSat users responded they felt a major element of their demand, namely the English premiership and other European soccer leagues, were missing. Except some selected matches from the Spanish and German leagues, they said they could not access to live soccer games. To fill this vital gap, they said they had to go to places where pay DStv services were provided.

Regarding movies, fashion and talk shows, both ArabSat and DStv viewers had no hesitation in stating that their needs as television audiences were comprehensively met. In an in-depth interview, one of the married women from FGD1(C) explained the options ArabSat provides as follows:

I am satisfied with ArabSat as it is. It has everything we need for our family. My husband accesses all news channels of his choice. I get movies and such fashion and talk shows as Tyra Show and Oprah Show. Tyra Show presents models and fashion designers-I like that part. Tyra herself is fabulous, isn't she? Her clothing is great! She also invites music and movie celebrities. I watch her show with pleasure and excitement. We bought ArabSat some two years ago, and my [two] children abandoned Ethiopian Television altogether ever since. I can say my six-year old daughter, the older of the two, is addicted to MBC3 (children's channel) programmes. Sitting tight for long, she tunes in with high interest and serious attention.

Tomlinson (2004:302) critically writes that "cultural imperialism is [...] seen as an ideological property of the text itself. It is seen as inhering in the images of dazzling skyscrapers, expensive clothes and automobiles, lavish settings, the celebration in the narrative power and wealth and so on". However, he further presents the arguments of media researchers that meaning is negotiated by audiences, and audiences relate capitalist media products to their own cultural values. Therefore, it seems wrong for the media imperialism thesis to assume that the media texts " have an obvious ideological manipulative effect on the power".

In my research results, although students consuming American media have rarely attached ideological implications of the television they view, their responses regarding the influences of global (American) media products generally suggest a significant leaning towards Western values as a standard of life styles.

### 4.3.3. Evaluation of Local Television Programming

The heterogeneous focus group made up of broadcast students from the Mass Media Training Institute (MMIT) under the Faculty of Journalism and Communication of Addis Ababa University had two ETV journalists. Both of them emphasised that ETV had been weak for some time. One of these journalists stated that he watched ETV programmes “not so much because they interest me. But I feel I have some input myself. I attend my own productions to look for ways of improving the quality”. The other journalist pointed out that he watched ETV news, documentaries and his own programmes at different phases of production and while on air. He then enlisted a number of weaknesses of ETV:

ETV operates with almost no professional human resource base and very outdated materials [equipment]. The bosses have no clue of media management. They come with political appointment and content controlling mentality. Also journalists are often inefficient and unprofessional. Quality of production is compromised for urgency. No balancing with other perspectives of government policy and political issues are made as officials decide what to emphasise. You lack a sense of responsibility and accountability in a top-down approach with imposition to television programming; thereby production lacking journalistic quality and creative presentation.

Broadcast students in the same group also complained that ETV programmes are even more disappointing when seen professionally. They mentioned the poor presentation format, low quality production, absence of credibility, government propaganda, out-dated news as opposed to fresh ones, program over-repetitions, and lack of entertainment to be the major flaws of local programming.

All these respondents underlined that local televisions need to build their institutional capacity while a female discussant expressed the need to diversify local television options by allowing commercial television to come into the scene. “As they will aim to maximize their profit,” she added, “they will strive to meet public demands for entertainment while at the same time they entertain socio-political issues from different viewpoints unlike government media”.

All types of transmission or broadcasting in general and commercial broadcasting (television, in our case) in particular can indeed play a pivotal role in both providing wider options of entertainment and other types of programming which drive audiences to global media and address local issues of societal relevance. They also indicated that the issue of credibility can be dealt with as competitive television landscape emerges with the coming into the scene of commercial and public broadcasting.

Here, it may be important to raise this question of ownership of ETV. Public Relations Head with Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority showed no hesitation in dubbing ETV a public broadcasting service from legal point of view although he “could understand that with government allocating budget for ETV’s operation, it may claim to deserve some benefit from the station’s services”. Otherwise, he said:

ETV has its own charter and it is established by a proclamation. If you see its board distribution, it has

included religious leaders and others. It is true that the Information Minister is the Board Chairman. But he acquires that position as independent, not as EPRDF member. The Board is accountable to Parliament. The overall aim of its programmes is to reflect government policies and create public awareness of the process of democratization. Not that it cannot criticize the government though.

UNESCO (2005: 15-16) has identified four major principles underpinning public service broadcasting. The first relates to *universality* whereby “public broadcasting must be accessible to every citizen through out the country”. If we take the geographical coverage of ETV without even considering the affordability of the services to all citizens, 47% is a little bit too much behind the assumption. The second one is *diversity* in terms of genres of programmes offered, the audiences targeted, and the subjects discussed. If we go by the results of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews in this research, we can fairly argue that ETV hardly diversifies its programme genres because of lack of entertainment to say the least. Nor does it produce programmes to the taste of diversified audiences under the circumstances in which government takes prominence. The third principle has to do with independence. “[T]he broadcast should be independent, thereby allowing the freedom of public broadcasting to be maintained against commercial or political influence”. If not commercial, political influence is evident in the way that ETV does its programming. Not only does ETV seem to devote its programming to government support and policy promotion, it often denounces views opposite to the government. News Centre Head with ETV agreed that ETV indeed propagates government views predominantly. For him “BBC does the same. Except some parliament debates and incidents, the programmes simply take up the ideas communicated through the queen’s speech at the beginning of the year.”

Gebremedhin (2006:10) writes that “the Ethiopian state-owned media system aims to model itself on the British and South African Broadcasting systems and... [these media] are accountable to boards of management appointed by the House of Representatives, and they have their own editorial policies independent from the state”. However, he asserts that “as these stations are financed by, or under the control of the government, there is still a question about how independent they really are, as they are state broadcasters rather than public-service broadcasters”.

The local television as a whole can arguably be said to be hardly credible and neither does it appear to treat diverse views. Speaking of credibility, it is worth mentioning an episode from II3: “My uneducated mother finds her eleven-year old grand son lying repeatedly. You know what she said to him? My son, you are becoming such a good liar as ETV (long laughter).”

Fourthly, public service broadcasting must be distinguished in its services from other broadcasters. “This principle must lead public broadcasters to innovate, create new slots, new genres, set the pace in the audiovisual world and pull other broadcasting networks in the wake.” It is not time to evaluate ETV from this angle at this time as it is the only local broadcaster in the local television environment.

While the Public Relations Head with EBA, the broadcast regulator, argued that ETV is a public television, the Head of the News Centre with ETV took another approach. For him, ETV as a government media has been engaged in “Development Journalism despite the global trend that entertainment leads 21<sup>st</sup> century media”. He added that “even entertainment is approached by ETV from a development perspective whereby dramas and similar entertainment productions are based on development issues.” In a similar fashion, the PR Head with EBA pointed out that “[B]ecause ETV pursues development journalism, it often covers government policies in positive light although it may criticize government activities if need be”.

Obviously, the local television landscape can be characterized by one that greatly lacks entertainment options, one of the reasons that may drive young audiences to transnational television channels. As explained in the literature section of this research, Herman and McChesney (1997) establish that the degree to which Western mediated cultures influence developing countries partly depends on the strength of the indigenous forces of resistance. In this regard, the local television programming of serious and unpleasant nature looks to be way behind bringing such indigenous forces of resistance into its viewers.

#### **4.3.4 Evaluation of Transnational Television Programming**

All respondents from the category of transnational television viewers of both DStv and ArabSat asserted that the foreign media with which they frequently come into contact are generally very comprehensive in the sense that they provide a range of options for viewers

and maintain high level of production quality. Although the respondents recognize that these media incorporate global news media of prominence, they see them as entertainment media due mainly to the fact that they largely watch entertainment programmes.

An ArabSat viewer from FGD6 (B) had the following to say.

Information is not what I mainly access from ArabSat. I know there are a number of news channels but those are not my primary interest. As I am mostly engaged in pastime viewing, entertainment is my preference. Therefore, ArabSat for me is an entertainment television. Still, it has a significant lack of entertainment due to the old movies and insufficient music shows it provides in its entertainment package.

Another respondent from FGD2 (A) stated:

The absence of major European football leagues, particularly the English Premiership, makes ArabSat a deficient television for us Ethiopian young men. Even those leagues that are shown on this media, apart from their less quality football, have commentaries in Arabic language which we do not understand at all. I am not denying though that ArabSat has been an excellent option compared to local television.

Although she is not particularly interested in the international news channels, III strongly criticized them for their extremely thin coverage of Ethiopia:

There is a huge coverage of Africa by BBC but Ethiopia is almost forgotten. I saw only a few news reports on the 2005 elections and the chaos that followed. Particularly positive news and documentaries on Ethiopia are rare. My husband always gets upset about this unfairness although he still likes BBC programmes.

Viewers of transnational media are generally positive towards the programmes they come into contact with. They perceive these media as providers of a broad set of options for

entertainment to their taste. As a result, they have significantly distanced themselves from local television which all think is devoid of entertaining quality.

#### **4.3.5 Differences in Viewing Preferences among Family Members**

Findings from focus group discussions as well as in-depth interviews have indicated a clear divide between preferences of family heads and elderly family members on one side and young members including respondents for this research on the other. The question on whether there are any differences among their family members of programme preferences, channel preferences, local vs. ArabSat/DStv preferences, or other types elicited responses of the following kinds.

FGD 1 (A): My Dad loves ArabSat channels like we do. But he does not compromise his watching the evening news on local television. He also wants Al Jezeera television to run all night long. But because we insist on changing the channel, he often allows us to watch shows of our interest and leaves the living room. Mom is indifferent.

FGD1 (B): My biggest challenger is my younger brother who is fond of soccer. While I go for talk shows he goes for soccer. We have similar movie choices though. We dominate the family in setting the TV the way we like but our father at times switches it to ETV in case there are major events in the country.

FGD 2 (A): Sometimes we may have slight differences but all of us (three brothers) except our mother have similar preferences. We watch no local television. Mother does not watch ArabSat. So we brought a television set into her room so that she would watch ETV.

I13: My mother and my elder sister watch local news. We all watch the Saturday night television drama on ETV2 with interest. I watch *Ethiopian Idol* and *Shay Buna* occasionally. They don't. Mostly though, I use the television set for VCD. I love Hollywood movies very much. The problem is I have to always wait for my mother to go to bed to start my watching, switching ETV off.

There are generally slight differences of preference among transnational television viewers in as far as local television and transnational media are taken as two major alternatives. Though local news draws the attention of family heads and elders, foreign television products are by far the most preferred ones.

However, results of focus group discussions have shown that within the transnational television programmes, young female viewers are more into fashion and talk shows while their male counterparts prefer sports. Both young female and male viewers take huge interest in movies and music run on ArabSat and DStv. A focus group discussant [FGD7(A)] said: "Sometimes you may have particular movies you want to watch but other members of the family may need to watch another one. But most of the time, we do not have big differences as far as we agreed to watch films on television." Similarly, an in-depth interviewee (I15) said, with music shows and movies on DStv, "[W]e just watch together with no one of us complaining."

Results of the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews clearly indicated that transnational television viewers have relative similarities in their viewing preferences of

entertainment programmes. Although family heads and elderly family members take a considerable interest in some ETV programmes like news, differences are generally small in as far as local versus transnational options are taken. In other words, the transnational television channels appear to be a better avenue to bring about whole-family viewing than is the local television programming.

#### **4.3.6 Understandings of Global Media and their Implications**

The researcher's explanation to respondents on the media imperialism thesis triggered heated discussions among them. Almost all respondents acknowledged that global media have indeed promoted American culture. The propagations of American culture, according to many focus group discussants, have one or another form of influence on local cultural values:

FGD<sub>1</sub> (C): Foreign media have [an] influence on our local identity. You can see it in the styles and types of clothing here in town. Indeed, local culture is under increasing threat due to people's exposure to the Western world in many ways. Given our low level of civilization, we may do what we just see [on Western media] and that is bad. Technology wise, we learn a lot from our exposure to the world through media.

ETV Journalist<sub>1</sub>: The influence of transnational media on poor countries is out of question. They are well organized not only in terms of their financial base but also in their media policies which allow them to entertain a high degree of independence. ETV is losing audiences to these media and there is a significant inclination on the part of the

Ethiopian urban youth to appreciate Western values due to its exposure to global media.

Broadcast Student1: The world is changing into a small village because of global media. No doubt Western values are increasingly influential in the process. That may be a problem for our local identity and cultural values.

Not all, however, believe that global media have adverse effects outweighing positive contributions. In fact for broadcast student<sub>2</sub>:

The positive [influence of global media] outweighs the negative. Music clip producers [in Ethiopia] are, for example, using modern and professional techniques and costumes like Western music to produce a modern blend of our own culture with Western production quality.

ETV journalist<sub>2</sub> acknowledged that the negative impacts of global media on local identity and values but takes his assertion further by arguing that “The negative impacts can be minimized by maintaining the strength of the local media scene. Quality and culture-reinforcing local programs that are appealing to viewers need to be designed.”

On the other hand, there were respondents who seemed to have taken Western values as a standard to be pursued. According to IIA:

It may be impossible for us to be like the people in the west in our dressing styles, feeding habits and seeking enjoyment given our low economic status. But it is not something [to which] we don't aspire. They are lovely, aren't they? Having ArabSat at home now, I can see myself change in the way I dress and make myself up. Once married, I never cared for cosmetics, for example. But through increasing exposure to

fashion shows and talk shows on ArabSat, I'm developing growing interest in being well made up. I also attempt to imitate clothing styles from show hosts and guests and celebrities (laughter)

Similarly, FGD6 (B) maintained that: "There may be a Western ideological interest communicated on Western media. But I don't care. I just enjoy the quality shows and movies on ArabSat."

These assertions indicate that viewers of global media may not be aware of ideological implications of global television messages, but it does not nullify the argument that in a situation where there is weak local television scene, the global culture which mainly flows from the west to the rest would prevail.

An attempt was also made to find out what officials from ETV and EBA had to say in relation to ideological implications of the one way flow of cultural and media products from the West to poor countries via global media.

Public Relations Head with Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority: Media Imperialism is real in developing countries. That is why in our new proclamation we set aside huge percentage for local, regional and national productions and programmes as a requirement for local media establishments. That is partly the reason why foreigners are not allowed to own media in Ethiopia and other developing countries.

News Center Head with ETV: Media Imperialism is a scenario which has come about with clear Western ideological intents. We buy most of our foreign news from

Reuters. It sends us both texts and images. From 13 news [items] stories to be run in 30 minutes, you may not believe that we often find no news to the taste of our audience. Ten of these news [items] may be about chaos, explosions and suicide bombing in Iraq, etc. They send us a news story about the death of one person in Palestine while we have many here dying from various calamities. [...] Disappointed with the types of news, we were to interrupt our link with Reuters. But they contacted us in no time in response to our complaints and promised to provide more relevant news on Africa and other parts of the world. After all, they know that they don't cover good news on Africa. Let me give you an example. America lost more than 3000 citizens to the 9/11 attack on New York. They never ran news with images of white corpses. But they always show us black ones from the Rwandan Genocide incidents. As we are now well aware of the Western intents behind running such bad images, we have decided not to show such images any more.

This assertion is in line with what Ginneken (1998:1-2) argues to be mental framing exercised by global media news. He imagines a television news item that reads as follows.

The Middle East conflict has claimed another Western victim. An American citizen was kidnapped outside the Peace Hotel in East Jerusalem on Saturday, December 24. The incident occurred at 9 p.m. (7 p.m. GMT). He was subdued by four masked men and driven away in a van. The victim is James Johnson (33), a black preacher from Trenton, New Jersey. He had come for a tour of the Holy Places with the church choir. Israeli authorities say responsibility has been claimed by the armed March 13 group. They have said they want to exchange the hostage for a fundamentalist cleric, who was arrested during a retaliatory raid against a terrorist base in Southern Lebanon last week.

Ginneken then explains that many things are implied in the news and these implicit messages can be interpreted by whoever knows the cultural codes. He first of all asks

whether such an event would have been reported if it had happened in the outskirts of an African capital or the victim was not an American. Other questions he raises include why 'authorities' on the one hand and terrorists on the other, why one incident is said to be 'kidnapping' and the other 'arrest', and why one is a 'terrorist' act and another 'retaliatory', and so on.

Ginneken's view suggests that the global media frame news in the manner that they give due prominence to certain geographical locations and news contents. In effect, implicit but well understood messages or cultural codes that categorize people and places in different ways are disseminated through these media. Granting prominence to some part of the world and denying another or covering some areas in favourable light and another with negative images, such media outlets can create stereotypes. This happens in a one-way flow of information that has enjoyed non-resistance from poor nations. Rather young people from these impoverished countries are likely to think that what the West communicates through these media are standard cultural practices to be aspired.

For FGD 1 (B), for example, our own costumes as they are traditionally made do not interest her as such. She believes; "Global media are good to learn where they [the West] have reached. When you see the works of foreign designers you try to refashion yours into forms that appeal to our time". Somehow, there appears to be a perception that pursuing

Western life styles by way of transforming ours (into something like theirs) is the way forward.

FGD 6 (A) concurs that although she personally watches Western movies to entertain herself, she added; “I can understand many young people watch these media productions as a means to escape from their real situation and superficially imitate the West. They are more like Westerners in their dressing and hair styles. We don’t seem to use our contact with the Western media to adopt technology.”

Many respondents in focus group discussants mentioned city boys’ messy haircuts, the earrings they wear, girls’ smoking, alcoholism and sexy look as illustrations of the influence of global media images. FGD 5 ( A) remembered that “Alishya Keys had to come on *TV Africa* show some years ago for our city girls to frequently do their hair in plaits. But actually, the style has been there for long with Ethiopian rural as well as urban women.”

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

It is clear that the legal ground for television broadcasting service in Ethiopia is not an absolutely level playfield. It lacks clarity, for instance, in distinguishing government and public broadcasting. Its accountability is questionable as it allows absolute government involvement in the performances of the broadcast regulator. However, the broadcast

proclamation is not totally discouraging. Rather it is unfortunate that the potential of available legal provisions is not fully tapped. Despite encouraging stipulations for launching commercial and public broadcasting, these media types are not taking their share in the landscape as yet.

Government television is predominantly an outlet for such serious areas of treatment as development, politics, social and cultural issues. As a result, young viewers of local television grumble about lack of traits of entertainment in the local television broadcasting service. This has contributed to the youth's huge consumption of Western cultural products in the forms of transnational television programmes, cinema, VCD and DVD records. In effect, young viewers appear to be more emotional, thereby taking Western practices for granted than they are critical to essentially negotiate meaning in their reception of global media products against their own values.

The next chapter will briefly capture the main elements of the entire body of work this research has come up with. Then, it will provide some concluding remarks and suggestions which the researcher believes would help address the loopholes of the Ethiopian television landscape.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Summary

The study has been conducted to describe the television landscape in Ethiopia focusing particularly on legal and college audience perspectives. In the process, the main legal documents relevant to local and foreign broadcasting services have been consulted and college/university students contacted. Specifically, the study examines audiences' reactions to local and transnational television programmes. It also explores differences of viewing preference among family members in cases where there are both local and transnational television options. Similarly, it has been attempted to identify preference differences within transnational television.

Justified by the fact that the study has aimed to examine the implications of the global television on the local television scene, the researcher found it important to take the media imperialism thesis as a theoretical framework. As the theory has received serious scholarly responses, it has also been found essential to review its critiques.

The qualitative research paradigm has been used as a method of study. Accordingly, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were conducted to explore audience reactions to local and transnational television programmes. The focus group discussions were found useful to get a substantial amount of information on the students' reactions as the group dynamics helped to create active discussions. The in-depth interviews were equally or even more important as they helped the researcher understand how the interviewees make sense of television programs of their preference. More in-depth outlooks of some active and other passive focus group discussants have been obtained by recruiting these respondents for individual in-depth interview sessions. As has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis, in-depth interviews are an appropriate tool in giving the human face to research problems. Personal interviews with relevant officials were also conducted to somehow understand the way they perceive the television landscape in Ethiopia and find out what they are doing about problems in the field.

The major themes within which audience reception of local and global media products have been discussed include the students' viewing habits, their reason for watching television, their overall evaluation of local or/and global television, viewing differences in their family and their understanding of global media and their implications.

One of the major findings of this study is that young television viewers have developed an increasing interest towards global television products, especially movies, music, talk shows

and sports, and this happens in a situation where local television is deemed largely irrelevant to their needs of entertainment. In the process, they hardly attach ideological values to the programmes they come into frequent contact with; rather they appreciate the values of the cultural products of mainly America imported through these media. It can not be argued comprehensively that the media imperialism thesis is flawless in its claims that the increasing exposure of audiences in poor countries to global television outlets will result in the homogenization or Americanization of cultural values. However, the media imperialism thesis still has a considerable appropriateness in that, given a weak local television scene with limited options, which not able to strengthen local forces of resistance; the tendency for young audiences who have accesses to transnational television to identify themselves with the Western cultural values is greater. In fact, results of the interviews indicated that the respondents do not only appreciate the quality of production in global television but they also aspire to pick up some cultural values such as clothing, fashion, hair styles, make-up use and so on. This is not to underestimate their aspirations to technological advancement, a trait that is also evident.

The growing leaning of the youth towards global media products in the absence of broader local television options has given way for a major imbalance between the local and global media reception at least for those having access to transnational television. Under the circumstances, audiences' appreciation of their own values may come from the social environment they live in but not that much from the local television they rarely tune in to.

The local television landscape is underutilized as it has not diversified services by way of broadening its provisions through commercial, public and community broadcasting.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The study has emphasized the investigation of the legal environment for local and transnational television broadcasting and the interpretation of meanings audiences make out of both local and global television programmes that they come into contact with.

The legal environments for the broadcasting sector in general, and television broadcasting in particular, are generally encouraging. However, practical implementations of the provisions in this regard have remained a far reaching exercise. Hence one can argue that there is poor utilization of the potentials of the legal framework. Such underutilization of legal rights can partly be attributed to the regulator's high affiliation with the government in terms of accountability, the appointment of officials and its overall performance in the absence of substantial dialogue with people having the capacity to enrich the television industry.

Although it can not totally be concluded that audiences receive Western cultural values imported via global television in a passive way, there is at least anecdotal evidence that increased consumption of these outlets, as compared to local ones, will lead them to grater

appreciation of these values. Such a state of viewership can stand against the appreciation of one's own values particularly when the local television scene is not taken seriously because of its perceived lack of appropriateness to the needs and tastes of young audiences. A poor local television environment will not help viewers identify themselves with their cultural values although it may not be too immense a threat to make them abandon their local identification altogether as they live in a social locale in which local values are still apparent.

Clearly, the legal provisions for television broadcasting vigorously need to be made use of to enrich the landscape. Options for television programming should be intensified by allowing the establishment of commercial, public and community broadcasting services while, at the same time, the government television needs to base its programming on audience survey to reasonably meet demands across viewers. Particularly for young audiences, it should consider the provision of culturally appropriate and still entertaining programmes relevant to their needs so as to achieve a remarkable balance between the enjoyment of the global and the local cultural values.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix I

### Thematic Questions

#### A. Thematic Questions for Local television Audiences

##### 1 Personal Detail

1.1 Age_____	3 Mother's Occupation_____	4 Father's Occupation_____
1.2 Educational Status_____	Mother's Educational Status_____	Father's Educational Status_____
1.3 Occupation_____	Mother's years of work experience_____	Mother's years of work experience_____

##### 2 Viewing Habits

How do viewers generally describe their television viewing habit?

How seriously do they watch programs of their choice?

What often disturbs their television viewing?

Do they prefer to watch television alone or with other people? Why?

##### 3 Reason for watching ETV or/and ETV2

Why do they watch ETV or/and ETV2?

How does/do ETV or/and ETV2 provide for their needs as television audiences?

What does/do ETV or/and ETV2 fail to provide for their needs as television audiences?

What do they use ETV or/and ETV2 as? (e.g. as a source of entertainment, global news and information, knowledge, local news, etc.)

Which programmes interest you more?

#### 4 Viewers' general evaluation of ETV or/and ETV2 Services

What strengths do they see in ETV or/and ETV2 programming?

What weaknesses do they see in ETV or/and ETV2 programming?

#### 5 Differences in Viewing Preferences

What differences of viewing preferences do exist among family members?

- Programme preferences,
- Channel preferences,
- Local versus DStv/ArabSat, or/and
- Other types?

### B. Thematic Questions for ArabSat/DStv subscribers

#### 1 Personal Detail

1.1 Age_____	1.4 Mother's Occupation_____	1.7 Father's Occupation_____
1.2 Educational Status_____	1.5 Mother's Educational Status_____	1.8 Father's Educational Status_____
1.3 Occupation_____	1.6 Mother's years of work experience_____	1.9 Mother's years of work experience_____

## **2 Viewing Habits**

When did they subscribe to DStv/ArabSat?

How do they generally describe their television viewing habit?

How seriously do they watch programs of their choice?

What often disturbs their television viewing?

Do they prefer to watch television alone or with other people?

## **3 Viewers' Reason to watch DStv**

Why do they subscribe to DStv/ArabSat?

What does DStv/ArabSat provide for their needs as television audiences?

What does DStv/ArabSat fail to provide for their needs as television audiences?

What do they use DStv as? (e.g. as a source of entertainment, global news and information, knowledge, local news, etc.)

Which one do they watch more (ETV, ETV2, DStv/ArabSat)?

Which programmes of DStv/ArabSat interest them more? Why?

## **4 Questions on changes of viewing habits**

How have their television viewing habits changed since they have had access to satellite television?

Do they watch more or less programmes on DStv/ArabSat over time?

Do you they watch more or less programmes on ETV after subscribing to DStv/ArabSat?

## **5 Viewers' understanding of the global media and their implications**

There is this argument that global media threaten the cultural identity of developing nations like Ethiopia through their Western (American) products. How do they react to this?

Do they think they are part of the global world because of their access to global media?

Is there any way that they think their local identity is under threat because of the proliferation of satellite media? If yes, how do they explain it?

## **6 Viewers' Evaluation of DStv/ArabSat and ETV Services**

What major strengths do you see in DStv/ArabSat programmes that you do not find in local television programming?

What major strengths do you see in local television programming that you do not find in DStv/ArabSat?

## **7 Differences in viewing preference**

What differences of viewing preferences do exist among family members?

- Programme preferences,
- Channel preferences,
- Local versus DStv/ArabSat, or/and
- Other types?

## Appendix II

### Interview Guides

#### **A. Interview Guide for Individual In-depth Interviews for Local Television Viewers**

- How often do you watch local television programmes?
- Which time is convenient for you to watch television?
- Which programmes do you watch with real interest? Why?
- What do you miss if you don't watch local television at all?
- How have/have not your needs as a television audience been met through your access to local television? (Would you explain in some detail, please?)
- How do you feel about having limited or no access to satellite media like DStv and/or ArabSat at home?
- Do you find any other means to access Western media products? (If yes), please tell me more about that.
- What interests you about the global media products?
- Do you think Ethiopian Television should make changes or improve in terms of its programming? If yes, what suggestions do you make?

## **B. Interview Guide for Individual In-depth Interviews for Local Television Viewers**

- What is your favourite food?
- What sort of books do you read?
- Who is your hero?
- How often do you watch DStv/ArabSat television programmes?
- How often do you watch local television programmes?
- Which time is convenient for you to watch television?
- Which programmes do you watch with real interest? Why?
- What do you miss if you don't watch transnational television at all?
- To what extent have your needs as a television audience been met through your access to transnational television ? (Would you explain in some detail, please?)
- What interests you about the global media products?
- Do you feel that your exposure to American movies and other programmes or shows has changed you one way or another? How do you explain it?

### **C. Interview Guide for an Individual Interview with ETV News Centre Head**

- What are your major duties and responsibilities?
- How does it feel to work for ETV?
- How do you generally evaluate ETV's performance?
- Do you conduct audience surveys?
- Do you feel ETV is addressing the needs of particularly young television viewers?
- Does ETV treat views opposite to government policies and political notions?
- How professional are ETV journalists?
- What major weaknesses do you see in ETV's programming?
- Does ETV have any improvement plan or initiatives particularly in relation to meeting the demands of young television viewers?
- How do you understand media imperialism?
- Do you see any ideological or other motives behind the proliferation of Western culture and values in poor countries?
- What kind of role do you think the local television should play in relation to promoting local identity and how?

## **D. Interview Guide for an Individual Interview with Public Relations Head with EBA**

- What are your major duties and responsibilities?
- What does your Authority mainly do?
- Who can own television channels in Ethiopia?
- Why hasn't EBA issued licenses for commercial and community television broadcasting services until now?
- Is ETV a public broadcasting or government/state television service?
- How independent is the Authority from unfair government influence?
- Is there any short term plan to issue license for other forms of television broadcasting?
- What other plans does EBA have in relation to diversifying the television landscape in Ethiopia?
- How do foreign television broadcasters operate?
- How do you understand media imperialism?
- How do you feel about the increasing exposure of particularly young Ethiopians to Western cultural values via transnational media outlets?

## Appendix III

### Proclamations

Appendix IV  
Program Schedules